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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

24 May 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT : Likelihood and Consequences of Nuclear Weapons
Production in Fourth Countries

Note. -- This memorandum has not been coordinated and is based on the JAEIC contribution to Part I of NIE 100-6-57, "Nuclear Weapons Production in 'Fourth Countries'-- Likelihood and Consequences," and on the departmental contributions to NIE 100-4-57, "Implications of Growing Nuclear Capabilities for the Communist Bloc and the Free World." A more thorough and coordinated analysis of this subject will be forthcoming in NIE 100-6-57 now scheduled to reach the IAC on 18 June.

A. Factors Affecting Likelihood

1. According to current JAEIC estimates, the following countries could, in the time shown, produce their first nuclear weapon using only native resources:

- a. Canada - within a year from time of decision
- b. France - in 1958
- c. Sweden - in 1961

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In addition, West Germany could--if given access to high-grade uranium sources--commence weapons production within five years from the date

Dissemination

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SECRET

SECRET

of decision, possibly in less time if this activity received an extremely high priority. In any event, West Germany could probably commence weapons production within 10 years without foreign assistance.

2. Belgium could satisfy the requirements and commence weapons production without foreign assistance within 10 years. Japan could also produce weapons if it were able to exploit recently reported uranium deposits to provide reactor fuels. India, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany could do so only by extraordinary efforts and by assigning the highest priority to a weapons program.

3. Communist China, Australia, Israel, and Poland all lack some of the requirements for a successful program and would require significant foreign assistance. The early steps in a nuclear energy development program are already underway in Communist China with Soviet assistance.

4. At the moment only France, Sweden, and possibly Communist China are seriously considering at the official level a nuclear weapons production program. There is substantial support for such a program in France and within the Swedish government. We have no evidence of Chinese Communist weapons-directed activity, but we believe that the leadership will feel it essential to have their own weapons supply. In Canada there is a growing desire to acquire nuclear weapons for

SECRET

air defense but no pressure yet for domestic production. The West German government tends privately to favor the acquisition of weapons, in the absence of nuclear disarmament, but there is still strong popular opposition and no plan for production. At the present time the Japanese public is overwhelmingly opposed to the production or possession of nuclear weapons, but there are indications of interest among defense officials in obtaining nuclear weapons.

5. In the absence of some effective deterrent, we believe that France will undertake a nuclear weapons production program within the next year or so, and that Sweden will do so around 1961 when sufficient plutonium becomes available from its reactor program. Assuming that France initiates weapons production on a unilateral basis, it is almost certain that West Germany would follow suit, despite existing agreements to forego such production. Communist China will almost certainly seek to develop a weapons production program within the next decade, and Japan will probably do likewise. Israel might in time obtain weapons-grade material from another power, such as France, or through development of a reactor program.

6. In general, fourth countries desire to produce nuclear weapons in order to augment their own relative power position and to

SECRET

protect their own national interests in the period of growing nuclear capability of the US, the UK, and the USSR. These considerations will probably be the chief determinants in the French and German decisions to initiate a nuclear weapons program. Other countries, such as Sweden and possibly Japan, will regard such a program primarily as a means of enforcing their neutrality.

7. Fourth countries might be deterred from weapons production by either of two general developments.

a. Any disarmament agreement between the US, the UK and the USSR which was popularly regarded as a "first step" toward more extensive and lasting controls would create formidable popular expectations and strong pressures against any weapons programs that appeared to run counter to the spirit of the day. However, this effect would be transitory unless followed fairly quickly by effective controls on the testing, production, and use of nuclear weapons.*

*If, as the present Stassen proposal envisages, a UK-US-USSR agreement invited the adherence of fourth countries, then conceivably very great pressure would be built up for France and other possible fourth countries to adhere. However, this would raise immediate problems about Communist China. Moreover, nations such as France might well qualify their adherence by making it valid only so long as the three present nuclear powers did in fact proceed with nuclear disarmament.

SECRET

(1) We believe that France would not be delayed significantly by a "limited" first step agreement and probably only for a few years, at best, by more substantial controls on nuclear weapons. France would recognize that under any conceivable disarmament agreement the US, USSR, and the UK would retain possession of large numbers of weapons. In time the considerations now at work would probably prevail to impel France to produce its own weapons.

(2) In all probability the Chinese would still want to go ahead within the next decade, and it would be most difficult for the USSR to withhold the necessary assistance.

b. Agreement by the US to supply nuclear weapons to its allies in various sizes and in some quantity would probably tend to deter production by these countries. Such a deterrent would almost certainly be effective if the weapons were provided without restriction on use. Short of supplying nuclear weapons on an unrestricted individual country basis, allied desires might be satisfied for some time by the establishment

SECRET

of a NATO pool in which all members had a voice over use.

c. The combination of a limited disarmament agreement with some provision for US supply of nuclear weapons on a NATO pool basis might serve to deter French production for a substantial period. However, France would remain technically capable of producing weapons on only a few months notice conceivably without testing, and the psychological impulse for such production might become extremely strong if there were further serious divergences between the US and France.

8. Over the longer run, to the degree that fourth countries acquire supplies of fissionable materials free for weapons use, the likelihood of fourth power production will increase despite the implementation of either a or b above. So long as the US, UK and the USSR maintain substantial stocks of nuclear weapons and orientate their strategy towards the use of such weapons, pressures will inevitably grow among other nations to develop their own weapons.

B. Consequences of Fourth Power Production

9. Fourth power production in non-Communist areas would not greatly increase the deterrent felt by the USSR against initiating

SECRET

general war, but it might lessen susceptibilities of smaller nations to Soviet threats against them, thereby narrowing the possible area of Soviet maneuver and pressures.

10. The initiation of fourth power production in non-Communist states would almost certainly incite more threats from the USSR and generally increase tensions. In particular, the initiation of nuclear weapons production by West Germany (necessarily with national freedom of use) would probably cause a violent threatening reaction from the USSR. At the least, the Soviets would intensify their controls in the Satellites and would oppose even more rigidly any reunification of Germany. We believe, however, that the acquisition of nuclear weapons by fourth countries would not in itself cause the USSR to take armed action against these countries or to precipitate a general war.

11. Perhaps the most important consequence of fourth country nuclear production would be the tendency of fourth countries to take more vigorous action in support of individual national interests. These powers might be more inclined to become engaged in disputes which might eventually involve the interests of the USSR and the US. Thus, the danger would be increased that local disputes could erupt into armed conflicts and lead inadvertently to general war.

SECRET

12. Within the Soviet Bloc, the initiation of nuclear weapons production by France, West Germany, Sweden, etc., would increase Communist Chinese pressure on the USSR for both an interim supply of weapons and further assistance to start its own weapons production program. These developments might also create a desire in the European Satellites for a supply of weapons, but we believe the Soviets could meet this desire--bar a basic change in present Soviet-Satellite relationships--by some form of transfer to the Warsaw Pact command which in fact would preserve complete Soviet control.

13. Thus, we do not believe that the prospect of European Satellite pressure for weapons is a significant element in the Soviet attitude. The Soviets probably are concerned by the fourth-country problem, to some extent because of the prospect of increased Chinese Communist pressures on them, but more because of the possibility of the increased use or threat of atomic weapons in local conflicts, and above all because of possible West German production.

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FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



H.R. BULL
Lt. Gen., USA (Ret.)
Acting Chairman

- 8 -

SECRET